

The analysis of the concept of intertextuality carried out in this essay begins with a survey of the various ways in which the subject appears before Kristeva's introduction of the term as such. Then it concentrates on Bakhtin's and Kristeva's role as the first contributors to the development of a theory of intertextuality. The detailed study of the wide variety of perspectives from which the phenomenon and its increasing relevance have been approached by later critics constitutes the last part of the essay.

1. INTRODUCTION Intertextuality as a term was first used in Julia Kristeva's "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966) and then in "The Bounded Text" (1966-67), essays she wrote shortly after arriving in Paris from her native Bulgaria. The concept of intertextuality that she initiated proposes the text as a dynamic site in which relational processes and practices are the focus of analysis instead of static structures and products. The "literary word", she writes in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", is "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" (1980, 65). Developing Bakhtin's spatialization of literary language, she argues that "each word (text) is an inter section of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (1980, 66).

There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures. Rejecting the New Critical principle of textual autonomy, the theory of intertextuality insists that a text cannot exist as a self-sufficient whole, and so, that it does not function as a closed system.

From this initial approach, there have appeared a wide range of attitudes towards the concept of intertextuality and what it implies, to such an extent that it is practically impossible to deal with it without considering other related subjects or without taking into account the various contributions made by a large number of literary critics. One of the most immediate consequences of such a proliferation of intertextual theories has been the progressive dissolution of the text as a coherent and self-contained unit of meaning, which has led, in turn, to a shift of emphasis from the individual text to the way in which texts relate to one another.

Though intertextuality as a term appeared some three decades ago, and the twentieth century has proved to be a period especially inclined to it culturally, intertextuality is by no means a time-bound feature: the phenomenon, in some form, is at least as old as recorded human society (Worton and Still 1990, 2). Unsurprisingly, therefore, we can find theories of intertextuality wherever there has been discourse about texts, from the classics, like Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus, to Bakhtin, Kristeva and other twentieth-century theorists such as Genette, Barthes, Derrida and Riffaterre, among others.

Going back to the classics and beginning with Plato, it must be said that in spite of his opposition to poetry on moral, and hence political, grounds, certain aspects of his theory have much in common with some modern approaches to intertextuality. Bakhtin himself locates in the Socratic dialogues one of the earliest forms of what he terms variously the novel, heteroglossia, dialogism - what Kristeva will christen intertextuality. The dialogues, Plato's typical creation, are usually meandering and inconclusive discussions lacking overall unity and characterized by their digressive and playful tone.